

Monitor Update: Resources for *Pigford* Claimants

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This is not a USDA publication.

Resources for *Pigford* Claimants

1. Introduction

Claimants frequently contact the Office of the Monitor and request information and assistance.¹ One of the Monitor's duties is to assist claimants with "other problems" that they are having with regard to the Consent Decree. Many claimants, however, have problems that are not within the authority of the Monitor to solve. This Monitor Update provides a few suggestions for other resources that may be helpful to these claimants.

2. Debt Relief Available Only for Successful Credit Claims

Before using the resources mentioned in this Update, a claimant should be aware of two warnings.

a. Other Resources May Be Helpful

This Update mentions only a few of the possible places that a claimant might turn to for help. There are likely many others that are not mentioned here that could be helpful. If a group or agency is not listed here, this does not mean that the Monitor's Office thinks the group or agency does poor work.

b. Monitor Cannot Vouch for Groups Mentioned

Several groups and agencies are mentioned in this Update. The Monitor's Office cannot vouch for these groups or agencies. Each claimant should investigate the group or organization carefully before taking advice from them.

3. When the Monitor Can Help

The Consent Decree permits the Monitor to help claimants resolve problems that claimants have with the Consent Decree. For example, the Monitor can help solve claimant problems of the following types.

¹ The Monitor's duties and responsibilities are outlined in the Consent Decree and the Order of Reference. Claimants can receive a copy of the Consent Decree and/or the Order of Reference by calling our toll free number (1-877-924-7483) and requesting a copy.

a. Debt Relief

Successful Track A credit claimants may be entitled to have part or all of their USDA debt forgiven. Debt relief is confusing, however. If a claimant believes that he or she has USDA debt that should be forgiven, the Monitor may be able to help. The Monitor has also written a short guide, "Monitor Update Number 10, Debt Relief." This Update is available by calling the Monitor's toll-free number. Claimants with questions can contact the Monitor's Office for further assistance.

b. Injunctive Relief

Successful Track A credit claimants are entitled to receive Injunctive Relief. This may include, for example, priority consideration for a new USDA loan. If a claimant believes his or her right to Injunctive Relief is being denied, the Monitor may be able to help. Successful non-credit claimants also are entitled to a limited form of Injunctive Relief. A short written guide, "Monitor Update Number 4, Injunctive Relief," may also be of help. This Update is available by calling the Monitor's toll-free number.

c. Other Problems Related to the Consent Decree Settlement

Prevailing claimants may have other problems related to the Consent Decree. These could include, for example, the timing of cash payments, non-credit relief, some tax-related problems, and other matters. Claimants with these types of questions should contact the Monitor.

4. How to Contact the Monitor

a. By Phone – 1-877-924-7483

Claimants may contact the Office of the Monitor by calling toll free 1-877-924-7483. If the operator who answers the call is unable to assist a Claimant, Claimants may make an appointment to speak with a member of the Monitor's legal staff.

b. In Writing

The Monitor can be reached by writing:

Office of the Monitor
P.O. Box 64511
St. Paul, MN 55164-0511

5. When the Monitor Cannot Help

Problems faced by claimants often are not related to the *Pigford* Consent Decree. The Monitor is not allowed to help claimants with these kinds of problems.

For example, many claimants find it hard to develop the cash flow plans and other financial plans that lenders often want to see before a loan is made. Further, some claimants find it difficult to deal with private lenders and other creditors. In both cases, since the problems are not related to the Consent Decree, the Monitor cannot provide the kind of help the claimant may need. The following groups and organizations may, however, be of some help in these situations.

a. University and Extension Programs

A number of colleges and universities have programs that are designed to help farmers. The programs mentioned below actively aim to assist African American farmers.

1) *Alcorn State Cooperative Extension (Mississippi)*

Alcorn State University Cooperative Extension Program
Small Farm Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Project
1000 A.S.U Dr. # 479
Alcorn State, MS 39096-7500
Phone: 601-877-6128
Fax: 601-877-6694
Web site: none

Service Area: Southwest Mississippi.

2) *Tuskegee University (Alabama)*

Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program
204 Morrison Mayberry Hall
Tuskegee, Alabama 36088
Phone: 334-724-4441
Fax: 334-727-8812
Web site: www.tusk.edu

Service area: State of Alabama.

3) *North Carolina A & T Small Farm Outreach Training & Technical Assistance Program (North Carolina)*

North Carolina A & T State University
Cooperative Extension Program
Greensboro, NC 27411
Phone: 336-334-7024
Fax: 336-334-7207

Web site: <http://www.ag.ncat.edu/extension/programs/sfottap/index.htm>

Service Area: State of North Carolina.

4) *University of Arkansas of Pine Bluff (Arkansas)*

University of Arkansas of Pine Bluff Small Farms Program
1200 North University Drive
UAPB Mail Slot 4906
Pine Bluff AR, 71601
Phone: 870-575-8142, 7246
Fax: 870-543-8035
Web site: none

Service Area: Thirteen Arkansas counties: Jefferson; Lincoln; Drew; Desha; Chicot; Ashley; Crittenden; St. Francis, Woodruff; Lee; Phillips; Monroe; Arkansas.

5) *Southern University*

Louisiana Family Farm Technical Assistance Project
Southern University
Baton Rouge, LA
Phone: 225-771-3863
Fax: 225-771-5728
Web site: none

Service Area: Nineteen parishes in Northeastern Louisiana.

b. Farm Advocacy Group

The following groups are generally private nonprofit organizations that work closely with African American farmers. They are not part of a college or university.

1) *Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation*

Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation
Route 2 Box 291
Brinkley, AR 72021
Phone: 870-734-1140
Fax: 870-734-4197
Web site: none

2) *Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund*

Administrative Office
2769 Church Street
East Point, GA 30344
Phone: 404-765-0991
Fax: 404-765-9178

Georgia Field Office
P.O. Box 3092
Albany, GA 31706
Phone: 912-432-5799
Fax: 912-439-0894

Rural Training & Research Center
P.O. Box 95
Epes, AL 35460
Phone: 205-652-9676
Fax: 205-652-9678
Web site: <http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/>

c. Legal Organizations

Claimants may have questions about other legal problems. The Monitor is not allowed to provide legal advice to class members. Claimants experiencing legal problems may wish to contact one of the following nonprofit organizations that assist family farmers, including African American family farmers.

1) *Land Loss Prevention Project*

Land Loss Prevention Project
P.O. Box 179
Durham, NC 27702
Phone: 919-682-5969
Toll-Free: 1-800-672-5839
Fax: 919-688-5596
Web site: www.landloss.org

Service Area: State of North Carolina.

2) *Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc.*

Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc.
46 E. 4th St., Suite 1301
St. Paul, MN 55101-1109
Phone: 651-223-5400
Fax: 651-223-5335
Web site: www.flaginc.org

Service Area: Nationwide.

d. State Departments of Agriculture

Each state maintains a state Department of Agriculture. Claimants may want to contact their state department of agriculture for additional assistance. A listing of all of the states departments of agriculture can be found on the web at:

<http://www.accesskansas.org/kda/stateags.html>

e. USDA

USDA maintains the following resources that may be of help to claimants.

1) *USDA Hot Line for Minority and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers (MSDA)*

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has established an Office of Minority and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers Assistance (MSDA) to work with minority farmers who have concerns about loan applications filed with local FSA offices. The MSDA Office will operate Monday to Friday, 8 to 5 p.m. Eastern Time.

Office of Minority and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
Farm Service Agency
USDA
1400 Independence Ave SW
Mail Stop 0501
Washington, DC 20250-0501
Phone: 1-866-538-2610 (toll-free) or 202-720-1584 (local)
FAX: 1-888-211-7286 (toll-free) or 202-690-3432 (local)
E-mail: msda@wdc.usda.gov

2) *USDA Office of Adjudication and Compliance*

USDA maintains an Office of Adjudication and Compliance. The Office of Adjudication and Compliance is unable to address matters arising under the Consent Decree. This Office investigates and acts on claims of discrimination involving events in USDA-sponsored programs that occur after the close of the *Pigford* class period—that is, after December 31, 1996.

Office of Adjudication and Compliance
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410
Toll-Free Phone: (866) 632-9992
Phone: (202) 260-1026
TDD: (202) 401-0216
Fax: None
<http://www.ascr.usda.gov/index.html>

3) *Farm Service Agency Appeals*

Farm Service Agency (FSA) applicants may appeal many adverse FSA decisions. To appeal an FSA decision, the applicant must ask for a hearing within thirty days after he or she received notice of the adverse decision. If an applicant receives a letter of denial from FSA, there should be directions about how to go forward with an appeal.